INTERVIEW WITH AN INTERACTION DESIGNER

YOON C HAN IS AN INTERACTION DESIGNER, MULTIMEDIA ARTIST, AND RESEARCHER LIVING IN THE SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA. SHE SPECIALIZES IN BIOMETRIC DATA VISUALIZATION AND ENTICES VIEWER INTERACTION THROUGH EXPERIMENTAL SOUNDSCAPES.

ILLUSTRATION BY ANNIE DILLS

WHAT KINDS OF SENSORY KICKS JUMP-START YOUR CREATIVE PROCESS?

I'm originally from South Korea but I've lived in California for twelve years. I've always had a deep curiosity to know what's going on in my environment, society, and culture. All the news, information, articles, become the materials and sources for my creativity.

When I first got an Iphone, I was fascinated by the idea of a fingerprint passcode. I thought it was pretty amazing that biometric allows my body to became the password. The idea is tremendous but also frightening.

WHERE IS YOUR FAVORITE PLACE TO WORK?

I don't always work in one place. I've noticed that I focus best in environments with a bit of noise, so try to switch up my routine by working at different coffee shops. My favorite coffee shops are the ones that have good coffee!

WHAT ADVICE DO YOU HAVE FOR YOUNG ARTISTS?

Just keep on going, don't give up. I think art and design are especially competitive, and it's impossible to catch your big break on your first try. Rejection is the norm, and you have to keep applying yourself. Try to view rejection as an opportunity to pinpoint your strengths and weaknesses and expand your horizons.

HOW DID YOU BECOME INTERESTED IN INTERACTIVE DESIGN?

When I was in the junior year of my undergrad program in Seoul, Korea, I interned at Samsung electronics as a designer. The job wasn't super fascinating, but I had an opportunity to work with full time employees. I learned that developing software requires a shared feedback system between the designer and the user. This was fascinating to me because unexpected discoveries and innovations are bound to happen.

### WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE STAGE OF THE CREATIVE PROCESS?

Brainstorming and researching is my favorite stage of the process. This is both the most stressful but also the most exciting and fun. If you have a great idea, you feel it instantly. This "a-ha" moment is when the next stage of development becomes clear.

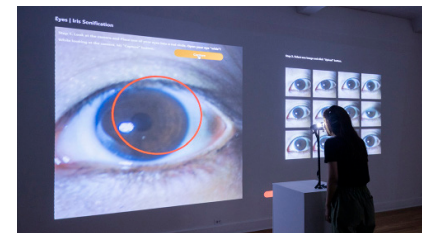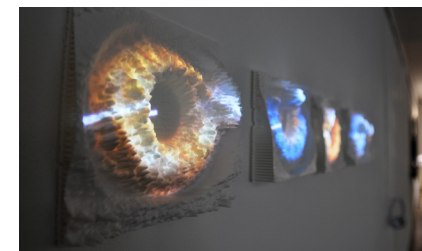### OUT OF ALL THE IDEAS YOU GET, HOW DO YOU DECIDE WHICH ONE YOU WANT TO BEGIN NEXT?

Pick the one that is the most exciting to you!

WHAT DO YOU HOPE TO IMPART TO VIEWERS, OR 'EXPERIENCERS' OF YOUR WORK?

Climate change is really here and we need to be aware of it. Data is a result, it is a footprint that we made. Hopefully this triggers a desire for action.
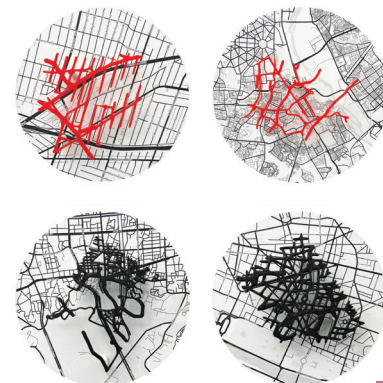
WHAT ARE SOME ROADBLOCKS YOU'VE MET ALONG YOUR JOURNEY AS AN ARTIST?

I love experimenting and learning about new technology but sometimes it's hard to keep up with how quickly it changes. It takes a lot of time, resources, and collaboration with others to make these large scale projects happen.

HOW DOES SONIFICATION (SOUND) HELP VISUALIZE DATA?

It's not just sound, but all of our sensory organs working together to help us absorb the impact of data.

> "... UNEXPECTED DISCOVERIES AND INNOVATIONS ARE BOUND TO HAPPEN."

WHICH OF THE 5 SENSES DO YOU ESPECIALLY ENJOY WORKING WITH?

As a designer, vision is my favorite sense!

WHEN DID YOU KNOW WHAT YOU WANTED TO BE WHEN YOU GREW UP?

Life is very unexpected, but I've always knew I wanted to be a maker. My parents are artists and I grew up watching my dad making large scale sculptures in his studio. I was fascinated by his pens, pencils, and all his weird tools for sculpting.

WHAT DO YOU LIKE MOST ABOUT YOUR JOB?

Helping, guiding, and learning from students. They are fast to adapt to new information and technology, and this keeps me on my toes. I work with many talented students and their work inspires me.

### WHAT ARE SOME DATA INVENTIONS YOU EXPECT TO SEE IN THE NEXT TEN YEARS?

Artificial intelligence is the future of data collection and visualization. I hope to see more policies and regulations born from data visualization, and a heightened awareness of our impact on the planet. Since we can apply machine learning to predict the future, we can anticipate which region, city, and forest will be affected by climate change. I expect to see more problem solving and positive action steering us in the right direction.

DO YOU HAVE ANY TIPS FOR GETTING OVERWHELMED IN THE PROCESS OF CREATING?

Sleep is super important! It's like therapy for your brain.

HOW DO PEOPLE RESPOND TO YOUR WORK? DO YOU HAVE A FAVORITE STORY OF ONE PARTICULAR VIEWER?

People really love my biometric data; it's a unique experience to see a huge image generated by your body. To see your own fingerprint or iris projected and animated like a mountain is mesmerizing. In a recent exhibit, involving video installations and data sonification about the drought in South Korea and California, an audience member said, "It sounds like the Earth is talking to us." Their response was very touching and it told me that the data had awoken an awareness about the environment.
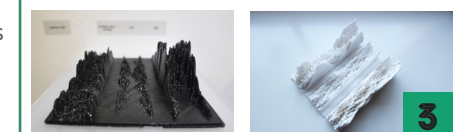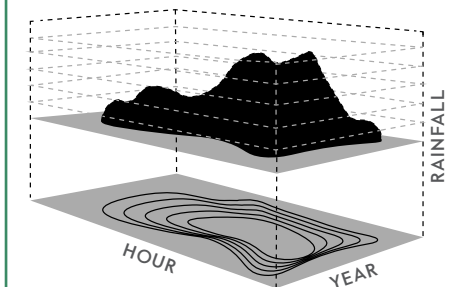
1. "ROADS IN YOU" IS AN INTERACTIVE ART-WORK THAT ALLOWS PARTICIPANTS TO SCAN THEIR VEINS AND FIND THE ROADS THAT MATCH THEIR VEIN LINES.
2. "EYES" IS INTERACTIVE BIOMETRIC DATA THAT TRANSFORMS HUMAN'S IRIS DATA INTO MUSICAL SOUND AND A 3D ANIMATED IMAGE.
3. THESE 3D PRINTED SCULPTURES DISPLAY DATA OF THE DROUGHT IN THE CALIFORNIA (BLACK) AND SOUTH KOREA (WHITE).